



Joe Raso

PRESIDENT

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Joe Raso is president of Blane, Canada Ltd., a leading economic development management-advisory firm headquartered in the greater Chicago region. In 2016, his first year with the organization, Raso led the development of the nation's first analytical tool aimed at demand-driven workforce development from the perspective of human resource executives - known as Synchronist Talent.

In 2017, Raso led the redevelopment of the Synchronist CRTS module to the new Synchronist Main St. module, which is designed to better serve the needs of chambers of commerce, downtown development organizations, and city governments in understanding the needs of the local business community. Also, in 2017, Raso led the establishment of "Quick" survey tools for the Synchronist Prime, Main St. and Talent modules. These new survey tools enable clients to hone in on immediate opportunities or challenges faced by individual companies and a market's business portfolio.

Starting in 2018, Raso co-led the development of new marketing initiatives, including a new company web site, trade show booth, email marketing campaigns and peripheral materials. Throughout his tenure with Blane, Canada Ltd., Raso has provided hundreds of online and onsite trainings of the Synchronist System, including statewide initiatives in Iowa, Missouri and Wyoming. He has served as a keynote speaker and presenter for economic development organizations in California, Iowa, Wyoming, Missouri and several investor-owned utilities.

Prior to his work with Blane, Canada, Raso spent more than twenty-years providing executive leadership to four private non-profit Main Street, economic development and chamber of commerce organizations in Colorado and Iowa.

Raso is viewed as an innovator in community and economic development. Under his leadership, the Iowa City Area Development Group was the first EDO in the nation to develop an entrepreneurial co-working space to support new company formation and existing business innovation.

Raso's organizations have received more than a dozen awards for business retention & expansion, targeted industry recruitment, marketing, workforce development and branding from: International Economic Development Council, Mid-American Economic Development Council, and Professional Developers of Iowa. Raso has also spoken at numerous regional and national conferences on economic development, innovation, higher education and workforce development.

In addition to entrepreneurship innovation, Raso co-led the development of:

- First-in- the-nation foundational skills assessment program to support workforce development efforts
- State of Iowa's first certified shovel ready sites program
- Statewide utilization of a unified building, sites and community database system.

Having a longtime interest in entrepreneurship and leadership, Raso co-led the first-ever Innovate Colorado Springs Week, a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship programming and education in the Pikes Peak Region. In addition, he completed his certifications in the Ice House Entrepreneurial Mindset facilitator-training program, as well as the Center for Creative Leadership's Leadership Development Program.